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Edinburgh

1873

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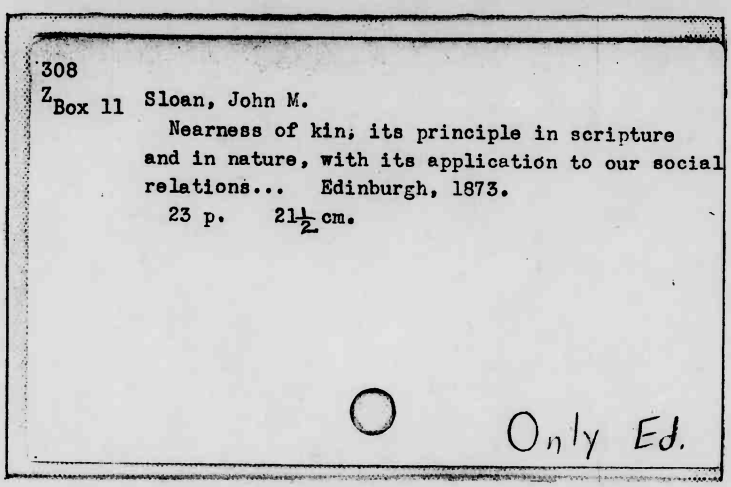

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NEARNESS OF KIN:

ITS PRINCIPLE

IN SCRIPTURE, AND IN NATURE;

WITH ITS APPLICATION TO OUR SOCIAL RELATIONS.

BY THE

REV. JOHN M. SLOAN, M.A.,

FREE SOUTH CHURCH, ABERDEEN.

EDINBURGH:
EDMONSTON AND DOUGLAS.

MDCCCLXXIII.

1873

PREFATORY NOTE.

THIS discourse, preached in the Free South Church, Aberdeen, on the 23d inst., is published by the request of the Elders of the Congregation. While the scriptural argument alone is here dealt with, and is the prime consideration in the settlement of the whole question, the social aspects of it are also of the utmost consequence; and as read in the light of the experience of other lands, as well as in that of reason, afford, in the author's opinion, a substantial corroboration of the conclusion herein scripturally arrived at, and also an independent basis on which to rest opposition to the proposed legislation.

FREE S. MANSE, ABERDEEN,
Feb. 26, 1873.

Oct 1915 2 Jan 13

NEARNESS OF KIN:

ITS PRINCIPLE IN SCRIPTURE AND IN NATURE.

'None of you shall approach unto any that is near of kin,' etc.—LEV. xviii. 6 ff.

THE question which it is my purpose at this time to examine in the light of Scripture, is, in one of its bearings, every now and again forced on the attention of the country and the Church.

It is a question that we fain would have nothing to do with; and we heartily wish that it could have remained where the legislation of 300 years ago left it. But these are days in which all legislation of the antique sort is being universally revised. Laws the most venerable are made to accommodate themselves to modern views and circumstances; or, if retained, they must vindicate for themselves the right to continue in force.

Within very recent years we have seen much that was old in the statute-book disappear with abundant noise, opening up wide and hopeful prospects; and there has been much exultation over the downfal of what was believed to stand only on injustice, or what was unsuitable to the requirements of the age. We cannot wonder, then, —we need not regret, that some should, with desire for change and with hopes for improvement, address themselves now to problems affecting social morality and the relationships of domestic life.

With matters of a purely political nature the minister of the gospel, as such, has nothing to do. But he is, or ought to be, profoundly interested in all legislation affecting morality. He is under sacred obligation, if he believes that there is a Bible-law of marriage at all which is binding on Christians still, to do what in him lies to prevent so great a disaster as a collision between what Scripture teaches with respect to it and the enactments of Parliament. We can scarcely over-estimate the unhappy effects of such a collision. If the Churches abide by their standards, all who marry within the prohibited degrees must be cast out of their pale; and if any Church abandon the teaching of its standards on this question, merely at the hint or bidding of Parliament, this will be a result even more lamentable—an uncovering of a moral nuisance even more offensive.

Still, be it observed, this is said on the understanding only that the law, as it at present stands, has the Bible warrant.

Our forefathers of 300 years ago may have been mistaken on this point. Though they could die for conscience' sake they may have misinterpreted Scripture; and it is with this possibility in view, that we say it is not to be regretted that such agitation from time to time of the question of the lawfulness of marriage with a deceased wife's sister, compels our attention to the Bible afresh, and makes us read with a keener scrutiny what the Law and the Testimony say on the subject; or, whether for us in these days, they have anything to say regarding it at all.

If in the end it be found that the Churches, with their standards, have been in the wrong, it will be to them a lesson both humbling and useful; and will show that a

christianized public feeling may come to be a more correct exponent of the spirit of Scripture, and a safer guide to its interpretation, than the creeds and articles of our Churches, and the minds of men cast in the mould of these. It will show that traditionary interpretations of texts and passages of Scripture may be corrected by the advancing moral convictions of a community, even as they have been corrected in the case of Genesis i., by advancing geological science. But whether it do show this, or show something very different, the attitude of all should be, humbly and reverently to sit at the feet of Scripture, and to fear no consequences. If the marriage in question, and such like alliances, are proved to be in conformity with the revealed will of God, then, how bodeful soever the vaticinations of some may be, let us not fear but that society, which is also of God, will derive good from them; while, on the other hand, if they be wrong, all the learned names that can be quoted in their favour, with their reasons, instead of their opinions, to boot, and all the Acts of Parliament in the world will not prevent them from becoming surely and gradually a blight and a curse to society and the Church.

I. In dealing with this subject I would notice, in the first place, that, in this 18th chapter of Leviticus, we have to do with the Mosaic law respecting the degrees within which MARRIAGE is prohibited. It is a marriage-law that is here before us. This is not a series of laws against special kinds of fornication and adultery. All fornication and adultery are forbidden without exception; and it would be to impute worse than foolishness to the legislator whose laws are here before us, to say that they deal

with mere acts of uncleanness. What would you think of legislation regarding theft, that prohibited the stealing of some dozen articles or so? or, regarding murder, that specified certain classes of people who were on no account to be assassinated?

In proof of our statement, if proof were needed, we might advert to John the Baptist's condemnation of the conduct of Herod in marrying Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. He proceeds on the marriage-law contained in this chapter, when he declares 'it is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife' (Mark vi. 18). He condemns it, not as an immorality, but as an illegality.[1] It was a union odious indeed on other grounds, but here condemned as being within the prohibited degrees.

Some may ask, if it is marriage that is here referred to, why it is not more definitely mentioned? Why should the act prohibited be always spoken of, not as marriage, but as 'the uncovering of the nakedness'? Perhaps, had another term with which we are more familiar been employed, this objection would not have been started. Had we read, 'thou shalt not commit incest with,' etc., it would have occurred to all, that what is condemned includes both marriage and acts of uncleanness.

No legal ceremony can modify the iniquity in such a case. It is incest in the single instance; it is incest though the connection last for life. And hence, as Gesenius says, 'these words, "to uncover the nakedness," always designate something abominable and vile.' There is a peculiar turpitude in the class of connections here prohibited; turpitude which no ceremonial of marriage can remove or mitigate.

[1] So Josephus, Renan, Alford, etc.

II. A second particular to be noted in respect of the laws before us, is, that they are WORLD-WIDE in their scope. They are in no exclusive sense Mosaic, Old Testament, or Israelitish laws.

We are here reminded of the reason assigned for God's sanctifying the Sabbath, and imposing the observance of one day in seven as a day of rest on all men: 'for in six days the Lord made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: WHEREFORE the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.' The reason assigned is based on the creation-work, and consequently binds the command not on Israel alone, but on humanity.

We observe, in reading this chapter, that the practices of the Egyptians and the Canaanites, who contracted marriages within the degrees here prohibited, are most strongly condemned. We are told that 'in ALL THESE the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: and the land is defiled: THEREFORE do I visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants' (vv. 24, 25). Again, we read in v. 30: 'Therefore shall ye keep mine ordinance, that ye commit not any one of these abominable customs which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein: I am the Lord your God.'

The preface to these laws, therefore, and the last seven verses of this 18th chapter, clearly indicate that such practices as are here prohibited were gross abominations even in the heathen: grievous abominations which were highly culpable, notwithstanding that they had no written law condemning them. The light of nature should have taught them differently. But they had neglected the

purer instincts of their nature: they had gone on from sin to sin; from one degree of moral darkness and obtuseness to another, until God left them utterly to a reprobate mind. And so, deviations from purity, which began with fornication and adultery, gradually developed into incest, and by and by into the unnameable and publicly unreadable brutalities of bestiality.

It is very instructive that alongside of these laws against incest should be placed such laws as those contained in vv. 19 to 23. It teaches us that sin darkens into ever deeper hues. Blunt the moral sensibilities by one act, by one false opinion, and you make your own nature a traitor against itself. You enlist reason on the side of error. You are moving down an inclined plane with reason as a pilot-engine, and conscience no longer acting as a break. What a procession of unsightly shapes moves before us here — incest, uncleanness, adultery, idolatry, sodomy, bestiality! And are we to suppose that all these came in at once upon the Canaanites even, and the Egyptians? Did not evil conduct induce, first, excusings of the sin, and then defendings, and by and by commendings of it?

We have the whole dark history presented in the closing verses of Romans i., and we see there, that not only is moral deterioration possible, and a law of our fallen nature, but that God exhibits His sorest judgments against sin in permitting such ruinous deterioration.

There are worse consequences to be dreaded than errors in legislation. The laws upon the statute-book are capable of being repealed. And many a law placed there once amid the hosannas of bygone generations, have, in these days, been cast out with no little ignominy, as never

having had aught of saving virtue in them, but much of the opposite. And laws which have been, and which may be placed on the statute-book in our own times, with all the boastfulness and arrogance peculiar to the living—seeing that the living are ever prone to fancy that they enjoy the monopoly of the wisdom and virtue of all time—may yet be cast out with indignation as unjust and immoral in their tendency by our wiser and purer-minded grand-children. Thus the errors of legislation, so far as the statute-book is concerned, may be rectified. The pages of it whereon they are, whether as printed or obliterated, sustain no injury. But legislation that is unscriptural in principle and immoral in tendency, writes itself as with corrosive ink upon the souls of multitudes. For there are many who do not believe in the Bible, or not to any purpose, who do believe in Acts of Parliament. They have not the spirit of Christ, nor care to have, but they glory in the spirit of the age. They have no faith in the plenary inspiration of God's Word, but they very much believe in that of their favourite M.P., and of the newspaper which they patronise. And upon these men such legislation works as a scripture from the Evil One. It is a leaven that infects and vitiates the mind of youth, which is so apt to glory only in emancipation. It works itself down into social opinion; it by and by deteriorates social morality; it lowers the temperature of the moral and spiritual atmosphere incalculably, and throws back the grandest work on earth, even the world's regeneration, and the perfecting of the Church of Christ, to the grieving of the Holy Ghost, and the triumph of the Wicked One.

The law of marriage contained in this chapter is, we maintain, a law for all nations and for all time. It is a

lasting and explicit expression given to the law written of God in the human conscience.

'Even nature itself,' the apostle tells us, 'teaches us, that if a man have long hair, it is a shame to him.' And 'even nature itself,' unless corrupted by evil practice and perverse reasoning, teaches that incest, such as is here prohibited, is 'abomination,' is 'wickedness.' So long, therefore, as man's nature retains aught of the image of God, so long these laws are binding upon it.

If we reject the law as here enunciated, or the authority by which it is supported, viz., the sanction of God's Word and the voice of man's own moral instincts, let us see where we stand. Reject these laws, and we have no law of marriage at all save what the legislature of the land may be pleased to supply. We have no standard to go by if we put these laws, and that authority on which they rest, aside. And if so, then what a prospect opens! Marriage with one's own sister would be lawful if the legislature were led so to decree! There would, in short, be no prohibited degrees whatever, save such as changeable enactments of men might institute. Do we not instinctively feel that this cannot be? Do we not feel that there are degrees of kinship that no law on earth could enable us with easy conscience to invade? Our nature, subordinate only to Scripture, is the supreme court of appeal; and our nature revolts against the doctrine.

There is, then, a law on this subject superior to Acts of Parliament. There is a law written in our hearts: the same law as was written in the hearts of Egyptians and Canaanites of old—but by them disregarded to their own undoing—the same law of incest which we find here transcribed in clear lines by the pen of Israel's lawgiver.

III. Another particular we would now call attention to, viz., that in these verses we have only SPECIMENS of the degrees within which it is forbidden to marry.

Now, is this true, or is it not? Have we here the whole list of prohibited degrees, or only specimen-instances?

(1.) I would say, in the first place, that it is impossible we can have a complete list here, for there is here, for example, no prohibition of a father marrying his own daughter.

Perhaps you say, 'O nature itself teaches that: no use for any such command.' Well, it is satisfactory to hear it admitted, after all, that nature has a voice: but, because nature has with some so feeble a voice, it is expressly forbidden (v. 7) that a son should marry his mother. If nature teaches the one thing, it equally teaches the other. And the fact that Scripture here condemns the son's marrying his mother, and says nothing about a father's marrying his daughter, a union in no way less revolting, is to be explained only by the fact, that specimen-instances are here adduced.

There is, so far as I can see, no prohibition here of a man marrying his full-sister. The 9th verse appears to prohibit the marrying of a half-sister by marriage; that is, where husband and wife have both been previously married, and had issue by their first partners, their children, though no blood relationship subsists between them, are prohibited from marrying, as being brothers and sisters. The 11th verse, too, prohibits marrying a half-sister by blood. We say, then, that there appears to be no distinct prohibition of a man marrying his full-sister.

There is here, moreover, no law forbidding a man's

marrying his niece by blood, *i.e.*, his own brother's or sister's daughter; and yet the nephew is prohibited from marrying his aunt. And further, while a man is forbidden (v. 17) to marry his grand-daughter, he is not forbidden to marry his grandmother, where the relationship is of the same degree of nearness.

Now, with these facts before us, it is simply impossible to say that we have in these verses a complete list of the prohibited cases. We think it must be admitted that we have but specimens and illustrative instances; for, if these do exhaust the list of prohibitions, what are we to say of a father marrying his own daughter, an uncle marrying his brother's daughter, a man marrying his own sister, or even his grandmother?

We, therefore, accept it as proved—that we have here but samples which embody the principle that pervades these laws regarding the prohibited degrees.

It may be said, 'then, if these are but samples, fewer would have sufficed.' But we must consider that Israel had had serious disadvantages to contend with in the way of retaining right views on this question. Apart from Egyptian practice, outstanding men of their own nation and ancestry had set an example, which, unless pointedly corrected, would do grievous harm, and pervert the national conscience.

Abraham had married his own half-sister by blood (Gen. xx. 12). Jacob was the husband of two sisters at one and the same time; while the father of Moses, Israel's great law-giver, had married his own aunt (Exod. vi. 20). All these cases required special correctives: Jacob's example, by a law against incest and bigamy, and Abraham's, and Amram's, by laws against incest alone. These, and

similar considerations, will explain why, when specimen-instances are given, they should be given with a measure of copiousness.

(2.) Another point which it is essential to notice, confirming the view that here we have but specimen-instances, is, that the law, as here stated, proceeds upon the line of the duty of the man alone. Not one of the prohibitions is put in the form of how the woman is to regulate her conduct in this matter of marriage. Was this because woman was not supposed to have any conscience in the matter? and that all the obligation to avoid incest lay only on the man? If there is no law for the woman, then, when she is guilty of incest, there is for her no transgression (Rom. iv. 15): the man alone must bear the sin. Or, if the law under which woman lies is written in her heart, then, as written there, it must be the converse of what is written in the man's heart; and must, consequently, be the converse of what is recorded here in the 18th chapter of Leviticus. Are we not constrained, therefore, to say, that when woman seeks to know her duty in this matter, and what are for her the prohibited degrees, she must trace, from her own standpoint, the very same lines and degrees of relationship as are here particularised for the guidance of the man?

I confess that, in these days, when men so chivalrously advocate Woman's Rights, it would, to my mind, appear to be infinitely more graceful and respectful to her, to place first on the list of her rights to be vindicated—not the right to have a vote, but the right of woman to have a conscience: the right of woman to have an interest in these divine laws in Leviticus: the right and obligation of woman to read these laws truly and fully forth from

her own standpoint, and to see that the law that binds the son binds the daughter: the law that binds the brother binds the sister: the law that binds the husband binds the wife: the law that binds a man in respect of a brother's wife binds a woman in respect of her *sister's husband*,— and in all these, and suchlike cases, binds the man and woman equally. We have said that not one single law in these twelve verses (7–18) is given explicitly to the woman: they are all for the man. And we ask, is she, therefore, left utterly without a law in the matter? Is she only to take *some* of the laws that are laid on the man, and read them from her standpoint? or, is she to take them all, and see how they, one and all, affect her duty, and ought to regulate her conduct?

On these grounds then, we insist, that we have in these verses but specimen-instances of unlawful marriages. Some manifestly incestuous in their nature are omitted; while not one speaks pointedly to the case of the woman.

IV. Let us now consider the question of NEARNESS OF KIN, which is specified as a valid ground against marriage.

The closest union recognised throughout is that which is old as Eden: the oneness of husband and wife. In various forms that is affirmed again and again. Indeed, it is not so much affirmed as assumed. They are virtually identified. Dishonour done to a mother is the father's dishonour (v. 7). 'Thou shalt not approach to thy father's brother's wife' (v. 14), 'she is thine aunt.' She is treated as one flesh with thy father's brother: she is treated as thy father's own sister: 'she is thine aunt.'

So, in the 16th verse, a brother's wife is placed on the same footing as the brother himself: 'it is thy brother's

nakedness.' The virtual identification is complete. More need not be said on this point, though the key of the position is here: the husband and wife are, in a very solemn, and sacred, and mysterious sense, one flesh.

Apart from this relation of marriage oneness, there is also a relation of 'nearness of kin' which affects the prohibited degrees.

Three times the expression, 'near kinswoman,' is employed in these verses. In verse 12, brother and sister are said to be 'near of kin:' 'thy father's sister is his near kinswoman.' In v. 13, two sisters are said to be near kinswomen; while, in v. 17, a woman and her daughter, and also her grand-daughter, are called near kinswomen.

Near kinship, therefore, in these three instances, is specified as a bar to lawful marriage. Observe, not that the parties are, in these instances, spoken of as near of kin to *you*, so to speak, but as near of kin to one another. Thy father's sister is thy *father's* near kinswoman: thy mother's sister is thy *mother's* near kinswoman: thy wife's daughter or grand-daughter is thy *wife's* near kinswoman. Daughterhood, sisterhood, therefore constitute that nearness of kin which is a bar to marriage.

The incestuousness of the connection consists in the being 'near of kin.' And if a father's sister is the father's near kinswoman, and a mother's sister the mother's near kinswoman, is not the wife's sister the wife's near kinswoman? It is sisterhood all round. It is the same degree—identically the same degree of 'nearness,' viz., sisterhood: and in violating that barrier of 'nearness,' the crime of incest consists. To marry a deceased wife's sister is undeniably to marry your wife's near kinswoman.

It is true, there is here no blood-relationship, as there is between you and a father's sister, and between you and a mother's sister; but if, as is admitted, a man and his wife are one flesh, what is his wife's sister to him? Is she not his sister? Or, if she survive her sister, does she cease to be the 'near kinswoman' of the deceased wife?

If it is reverted to, that there is no blood-relationship subsisting between a man and his deceased wife's sister, we have but to say that there are incestuous marriages possible between those who have not one drop of family blood in common—marriages condemned expressly in these verses, and also by common consent. May a man, for example, marry his step-daughter (v. 17), though they are not related by blood? or his step-mother (v. 8)? or his half-sister by affinity (v. 9)? or his father's brother's wife (v. 14)? or his daughter-in-law (v. 15)? These are cases in point. No blood-relation subsists between them: yet intermarriage would be incestuous.

There are, therefore, three distinct reasons contained in this passage prohibitory of marriage with a deceased wife's sister:—

1. The oneness of husband and wife constitutes the husband the brother, in so far as marriage is concerned, of his wife's sister.

2. The wife's sister, reading this 16th verse as a law to guide her, reads thus—'Thy sister's husband is forbidden to thee, even as his brother's wife is forbidden to him.' If two brothers may not successively have the same wife, two sisters may not successively have the same husband.

3. The fact that the wife's sister is 'near of kin' to the deceased wife, further, and by the sanction of the general law, imposes a bar to marriage with the husband.

Time forbids my doing more than saying that affinity and consanguinity impose restrictions to marriage to precisely the same degree—viz., the second degree. For instance—(v. 7)—a mother is one step removed by blood; (v. 8) a step-mother, one step by affinity; (v. 9) a half-sister by affinity, two steps; (v. 10) a grand-daughter, two steps by blood; (v. 11) a half-sister by blood, two steps; (vv. 12 and 13) an aunt by blood, two steps; (v. 14) an aunt by affinity, two steps; (v. 15) a daughter-in-law, one step by affinity; (v. 16) a sister-in-law, *one step* by affinity; (v. 17) a step-daughter, one step by affinity; and a step-grand-daughter, two steps by affinity.

It will be seen that the furthest degree expressly prohibited is the second, whether by affinity or blood. Hence it is that marriages between cousins are in consonance with the laws before us. Cousins stand to each other at the third remove in blood-relationship — to the father or mother, one step, to the uncle or aunt, two, and to the cousin, three steps. It is further very noteworthy and significant, that, of the twelve or thirteen cases here expressly prohibited, there are *seven* in which the relationship is by *affinity*,—being in the others by consanguinity. Surely this indubitably shows, as already noted, that incest is possible in numerous cases where not one drop of family blood is common to the parties guilty of it.

A statement made above to the effect that two brothers might not in succession have the same wife, needs a word of explanation. Many of you know that, in a particular case, the Mosaic law commanded, or at least strongly countenanced, such a marriage, viz., when the first brother died childless (Deut. xxv. 5). In order to perpetuate his name and prevent his family from dying out in Israel, and

his inheritance from passing into other hands, such marriages, in this special case, were sanctioned. But the law, save in that exceptional case, was what stands here in v. 16, and it is repeated in still stronger terms in chap. xx. 21.

V. We have now, in closing, to call your attention to v. 18, and the bearing which it has on the law we have been considering.

This verse runs as follows:—'Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other, in her lifetime.' We have maintained that v. 16 forbids marriage with a deceased wife's sister; that the law dealing with that matter is to be found there. The advocates of such marriages build entirely, I may say, so far as Scripture is concerned, on this verse. Let us, therefore, briefly examine it.

(1.) Notice first, that in the margin the alternative translation is given, 'Neither shalt thou take ONE WIFE TO ANOTHER to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other, in her lifetime.' It is a fact that the words rendered, 'a wife to her sister,' are frequently in Scripture translated, 'one to another,' and must be so translated. We give three instances. In Exod. xxvi. 3 we read, 'The five curtains shall be coupled together *one to another*.' The Hebrew words in that passage for 'one to another' are identical with those in this 18th verse, rendered, 'a wife to her sister.' In Ezekiel i. 9 we read, 'Their wings were joined *one to another*.' Again, the identical words as are here rendered 'a wife to her sister.' Once more, in Ezekiel iii. 13, we have the words, 'the wings of the living creatures that touched *one another*;' where, once more, the

Hebrew words are identical with those before us. Without dispute, then, frequent Scripture instances, of which these are a sample, show that 'one to another' is a natural, unforced, and, in many cases, necessary translation of the words in question. I do not mean to press this fact, save in this way: that—when this translation of the phrase, which other passages show to be warrantable, and even necessary, is employed here—it simply removes this verse from having to do with the question relating to a deceased wife's sister altogether, and applies it to cases of bigamy. I do not however say, that the present translation is wrong; but I do say, that no one can maintain that the *marginal* translation is certainly wrong; or, that it has not the sanction of several other passages of Scripture where it occurs. And, calling earnest attention to the uncertainty now indicated, I would cry aloud, 'Is it not hazardous—is it not wanton, to stake the whole question on this one text?'—a text which equally well bears a translation that makes it a prohibition of bigamy.

Surely, in the face of verse 16, and what is to be said on its bearing on the subject, it is not consistent with a sacred reverence for truth or purity, to stake the whole Scripture argument on such a verse as this disputed 18th. Is it anything short of the commission of the odious sin of incest that the woman has to dread, when she considers what bearing, if any, verse 16 has upon her conduct in respect of marriage? She must have her way made very clear—clearer than a peradventure; clearer than an unsettled translation of one single verse will make it: or else she is prepared recklessly to run a very awful risk. There is, however, a peradventure. Peradventure the present translation is the proper one. Peradventure the

prohibition is not a prohibition of bigamy—'one wife to another'; nor a prohibition of two sisters in succession—but simply of two sisters at one and the same time, as in the case of Jacob. Well, if so, then it is the dangerous example of Jacob that is glanced at here, and held forth as a warning. Patriarch though he was, he was guilty both of incest and bigamy. The incest of such a marriage has already been condemned in verse 16; the bigamy of it, and its evil and 'vexatious' consequences are here, in the 18th verse, set forth as an aggravation of such sin. The incestuous nature of the connection would continue even were the lawful wife to die; but the 'vexing of her,' which is one chief point noted in the verse, by such incest and its consequences, would be possible only 'in her lifetime.'

And further, if men contend that the restriction, 'thou shalt not take one wife to her sister . . . in her lifetime,' implies that thereafter, however, they may do so, then must they also hold that this very verse which warrants, as they think, such a marriage, also warrants the having two wives at the same time, provided they are not sisters. The inference is certainly as valid in the one case as it is in the other. Nor is it to be said, 'But Christ Jesus in the New Testament forbids bigamy—the one inference from the verse—while He does not forbid marriage with the sister after the wife's decease—the other inference.' For it were passing strange if, in this solitary particular, our Lord's teaching should even appear by one iota to relax the moral precepts of the Old Testament dispensation. For the hardness of their hearts, in Old Testament times, men were permitted, for trifling causes, to divorce their wives; even the having more wives than one was not dealt with as a great outstanding moral or civil offence;

concubinage was put under tolerative regulations; while, in another region of things, slavery was legislated about; and private revenge, by the hand of the avenger of blood, was allowed. Israel's darkened moral sense; Israel's entanglements in heathen surroundings and practices led to these imperfect laws. But when Christ came, the full blaze of moral purity burst forth in His teaching. Instead of divorce, and bigamy, and concubinage being tolerated—'Whoso LOOKETH upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed ADULTERY with her already in his heart'! Instead of private revenge—'Pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you'; 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'! Instead of slavery getting a footing under the gospel of Christ, see what the power of its spirit has done to emancipate the slave throughout Christendom!

The whole legislation of Christ in its thoroughness, in its purity, in its inwardness, in its jealous scrutiny of thoughts, and intents, and motives, is immensely in advance of such legislation as we have glanced at: and yet THIS, men would have us believe, is the legislator, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, while He has condemned the bigamy which one inference from the 18th verse seems to countenance, has been so tender and considerate as not to breathe one word against that inference from it which the 16th verse, as we have seen, brands as incestuous!

We think we may say of Scotland, 'We have not so learned Christ.' The laws of the New Testament breathe an atmosphere of divine purity wherever they touch on the relationships of man and woman. They are the counterpart in the New Testament, and in a fallen world too, of that unutterably holy statement of the Old, 'And

they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed'—a statement full of the fragrance and innocence of a lost Paradise.

We think, then, that on grounds of Scripture, we are called upon resolutely and unweariedly to resist the proposed legislation on this marriage-law that is again before the country. We oppose it on these grounds herein set forth, considering them to be scriptural and valid; and until they are proved to be neither, we must, to be loyal to truth, abide by them, and treat as matters only of respectful curiosity those mere 'opinions' of eminent and excellent men on the other side, which have been so industriously, and at so great expense, circulated throughout the country, in order to overwhelm the public mind.

Time forbids my saying anything, were I disposed to do so, on other bearings of the question. But, to mention nothing else, I would oppose this legislation in the interest of the good name, and loving sisterly heart of many a noble woman, who sacrifices much, that she may be a sister indeed in the darkened home, and a mother indeed to the bereaved children. Need I say, that were this law to be enacted, the higher the principle, the more sensitive the modesty in any female bosom, the more difficult would it be for her to do a sister's part when nature's need is sorest, and earth's sympathy most sweet. Far removed from such a home itself as might be aught that could bring a blush to the cheek, earth is not so destitute of slanderous tongues and evil-suspecting minds as to suffer innocence and modesty to dwell at peace within it.

How lovely the relationship and intercourse of brothers and sisters! How unrestrained their fellowship, and yet how holy! None who brings not a soul from the pit,

would darken it with a thought of pollution. Holy is the relation of children to parents, by which such a fellowship of brothers and sisters is consecrated. Have we thought of how truly holy and hallowing the marriage-relation is, in that it so makes man and woman one, that the one can say to the other, 'And thy people are my people'? Holier views of marriage would consecrate to us the relationship of sister-in-law.

God grant that that day be far from our beloved land —God's blessing be on those who labour to prevent its ever coming—when legislation shall make it possible, that either in the home or in the public mind, a single thought, such as would be devilish if cherished regarding a sister, should be harboured for a moment regarding the sister of a deceased wife.

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